

# A special conversation between YALI Network Coordinator Macon Phillips and South African climate change agent Catherine Constantinides in the lead up to #EarthDay2016

<https://soundcloud.com/americanagovfr/yali-network-discussion-between-macon-phillips-and-catherine-constantinides>

[Macon Phillips] Hello YALI Network. It's Macon Phillips coming to you from Washington, D.C., with a special message about Earth Day. That's right, Earth Day is on Friday, April 22nd. We wanted to make sure that everyone knows about this important moment. You're organizing events in your communities, you're talking to folks about climate change, about the environment, and we're really excited about the YALI Goes Green initiative that we've been pushing to raise awareness about important climate issues. Today I wanted, in addition to sending you this reminder, to offer you a special treat. We have been working on a YALI podcast that's going to be coming out soon. We had a great conversation with a member of the YALI Network. As part of that I wanted to get to you even sooner, before we even started the podcast. So without further adieu, this is Catherine Constantinides who comes to us from South Africa and we asked her about Earth Day. Hope you enjoy it.

[Catherine Constantinides] So Earth Day's a huge deal for me. This year Earth Day I'll be doing several things throughout the week. One will be a Twitter chat that we host on Wednesday night and then on Earth Day itself we're going to launch a campaign. And the campaign specifically stems from a huge challenge we have found here in South Africa, where we've had the biggest municipal collection of our waste come to a halt.

[Macon] When people ask you what do you do, which I'm sure you get a lot, how do you answer that?

[Catherine] I think the easiest way to describe it very quickly and in a nutshell is, I describe myself as an international climate activist and a humanitarian who focuses on human rights issues across our continent.

[Macon] Why climate? I know that there's a number of other issues within the human rights area, but why do you lead with climate? Why is that the most important?

[Catherine] You know, through my work, I have actually seen how climate change has affected our people across the continent. How people are no longer able to live the way that they used to 10, 15, 20, even 5 years ago. We see here in our country in South Africa the drought has affected us in a huge way, especially over this past summer season. We have seen people who are dying and people who are termed climate refugees.

[Macon] So I think one of the challenges that we run into with climate change, this has certainly been the case in the United States, it's pretty clear where you paint a picture of where the problem is. To run through all the effects that the change in climate is having on food security, on the weather patterns, and the list goes on and on. But you almost do that at the cost of painting such a dismal picture — people wonder what we can do about it. So what's your message to your peers? I

guess, where should they start? And what are actions that people can take and inspire others to take?

[Catherine] So I think first, identify the problem, work collectively, and also you need to really understand that education and awareness around climate change and the issues underneath that big umbrella needs to be unpacked at a local level for people to understand. And allowing the community to feel like they can take responsibility to look at the small things that they can do within their home, at work, and within their communities; those are the ways that we're going to be able to solve the climate injustices that we do see across our continent.

[Macon] Well wonderful, I really enjoyed the conversation; it's really nice to see you again. Congratulations on being named a Washington Mandela Fellow, so we look forward to hosting you when you come out here to the States. Until then, if you have any other thoughts or feedback about podcasts or things generally, I know you're not too shy about reaching out, so I look forward to hearing from you.

[Catherine] Awesome. Thank you so much and thank you for the opportunity. And again thank you for an amazing platform that allows us as young Africans to really be inspired by each other through this specific network.

[Macon] Awesome. Okay, have a great day.

[Catherine] Take care, you too, bye.

[Macon] Bye.

---

## The goal is to plant 7.8 billion trees by 2020. Can you help?

(© AP Images)



Many Africans are [already feeling the effects](#) of climate change. Not only does the daytime heat sap your energy, but it's also hotter at night and harder to sleep. The number of droughts and floods has doubled across the continent over the past 25 years, creating natural disasters that ultimately affect everyone by reducing crop yields and livestock production.

Can planting trees help mitigate these challenges? Yes! And this year's [theme for Earth Day](#) is "Trees for the Earth: Let's Get Planting." The goal is to plant 7.8 billion trees over the next four years — one for every person — in time for Earth Day's 50th anniversary in 2020.

Stay tuned to the [yali.state.gov](http://yali.state.gov) blog and learn how you can participate by organizing your own tree-planting activities. In the meantime, here are some reasons why restoring nearby forests and

planting trees in your neighborhood will help you and your community. They provide much more than food, fuel and shelter.

- Trees directly combat climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide gases that contribute to the greenhouse effect. One hectare of forest can offset the yearly emissions of between [333 and 417 cars](#).
- Trees clean the air by removing dust and absorbing pollutants like carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide and trapping them in their leaves and bark.
- Tree roots improve water quality by holding soil in place and preventing erosion and water runoff. They also prevent harmful chemicals from entering streams.
- Trees moderate heat by providing shade and preserve warmth by blocking strong winds. With proper placement of trees around your home, [you can save](#) 20 to 50 percent of heating expenses and reduce air conditioning needs by 30 percent.
- Trees improve your mood and health. They are aesthetically pleasing, adding natural elements to urban settings that might otherwise consist of concrete and metal. Having shaded areas in cities and developed areas will encourage more outdoor activities and social interaction.

These are only a few of the reasons why Earth Day 2016 is encouraging everyone to start or support a tree-planting initiative. This blog will soon be sharing some practical tips from your fellow YALI Networkers on how you can participate.

---

## **Unleashing the Entrepreneur in Every Woman**

“We believe that everyone is an entrepreneur,” said Takunda Chingonzoh, a 2014 Mandela Washington Fellow and YALI Network member. “It’s only a matter of people finding that aspect of themselves.”

Last year, Chingonzoh and his team focused on helping one particular group find that aspect of themselves: women. They did it through their organization Neolab Technology.

Founded in 2012, Neolab began with a goal to develop technology fit for Africa. It has since grown into “a startup factory.” The Neolab team recruits university students, trains them in entrepreneurship and forms them into teams. The teams work together to transform their ideas into sustainable enterprises.

Since then, Neolab launched its first training course exclusively for women.

## **Moments of Inspiration**

Five Model X participants work together 

on a finance management and literacy application. (Neolab)

The inspiration for such a course began in the United States while Chingonzoh was participating in the Mandela Washington Fellowship. During class discussions, he observed that comments from the male Fellows relied more on generic knowledge while those from the female Fellows revealed a deep connectedness to the community.

“That was the initial spark,” Chingonzoh said.

That spark ignited when Chingonzoh witnessed speeches from National Security Advisor Susan Rice, Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield and first lady Michelle Obama.

“I could see the kind of energy, the kind of presence they commanded and how it affected people,” Chingonzoh said. “It was inspiring.”

Through these experiences, Chingonzoh came to understand the roles women can play in leadership and technology and the valuable perspective they offer.

“I had been exposed to women in technology who were doing amazing things,” Chingonzoh said. “So my question was ‘How do you activate that same kind of drive in the women that we have in our societies?’”

## Training Exclusively for Women


For Chingonzoh and the Neolab team, the answer rested with providing a training class exclusively for women. They recruited 12 women from the local university and ran them through their standard seven-week training curriculum, which they call “Model X.”

The first part of Model X focuses on “activating the entrepreneur,” Chingonzoh explained. The second part hones more conventional skills such as idea validation and team building.

For the women-only training, however, Neolab had to add an additional training element to its curriculum: confidence building.

“They would talk about these great ideas,” Chingonzoh said, “but they would not have the confidence to push them across.”

## Gender Differences

University students participate in a focus  group as part of an “unconference” hosted by Neolab Technology. (Neolab Technology)

In addition to their lack of confidence, Chingonzoh noticed another characteristic that set these women apart. They wanted to solve problems. They didn’t want to create the next Facebook; they wanted to develop sustainable solutions that would help people and communities.

These women also displayed a dedication and tenacity Chingonzoh had not seen before.

“In the first class, you’re the one asking people to do this, this and this. With the women, by the third or fourth class, they’re the ones asking ‘What’s next? What can we do? How do we do this?’” Chingonzoh said. “They were taking the course with way more vigor and more drive than we had seen in previous classes.”


For Chingonzoh and his team, the results of this women-only training have been both “amazing” and transformative. Neolab has not only decided to host a women-only training course every year, but also to shake up the gender balance of its training team. Chingonzoh said it’s important for the women being trained to see other women in leadership roles. He believes this will provide them with a person whom they can relate to and will also boost their self-confidence.

“It’s really important to publicize and celebrate the women that we have in our networks who are doing all these incredible and amazing things, because that in itself serves as a way to activate even more women and even more girls to break out and lift up their communities,” he said.

To learn more about Neolab Technology, visit its [Facebook page](#).


---

## Women and Girls: A Sound Investment

For every year of secondary schooling a girl receives, her earning power increases  by 15-25 percent. (UN/Christopher Herwig)

Some of you have asked, “Why should we focus on women and girls? Why shouldn’t we focus on empowering everyone — women and girls, men and boys?” It’s a good question. The answer is because a gap exists between the opportunities and resources available to men and boys and those available to women and girls.

According to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), 1 in 3 girls around the world will experience gender-based violence in their lifetimes, 1 in 5 girls in the developing world who enroll in primary school never finish, and 1 in 7 girls in the developing world are forced into marriage before their 15th birthdays.

Women make up nearly 64 percent  of Rwanda’s Chamber of Deputies and nearly 39 percent of Rwanda’s Senate. Many credit women’s political participation in Rwanda with helping the country recover from its civil war.

(Rwanda Government)

A girl's situation does not improve with age. According to the [World Health Organization](#), complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the second leading cause of death for girls aged 15-19 globally. According to the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO), women own just between 10 and 20 percent of the world's land, despite making up more than 40 percent of its agricultural labor force. And according to [USAID](#), women-owned enterprises make up as little as 10 percent of all businesses in Africa.

Whether in the classroom, the hospital or the office, women and girls face challenges unique to their gender. The good news is that even a small investment in a woman or a girl can have a huge return.

## When Women Succeed, Society Succeeds


Investing in women and girls means taking actions — big and small — to bring about gender equality. It means changing society's attitudes and behaviors toward women and girls. It means rethinking the roles and responsibilities of women and girls. It means creating a world where women and girls enjoy the same human rights and have access to the same opportunities as men and boys.

Investing in women and girls isn't just the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do. Here are some benefits investing in women and girls can have:

- **Stronger democracies.** Women's participation in politics has tangible gains for democracy. According to USAID, countries where women hold at least 30 percent of political seats are more inclusive, egalitarian and democratic. Not only that, it also found that higher rates of women's political participation are associated with lower levels of government corruption.
- **Improved public service delivery.** Including women in the political space has benefits for citizens, too, because women are more likely to invest in the public good than their male counterparts. In India, for example, USAID found that political districts with more female representatives enjoyed greater community benefits such as investments in drinking water facilities and roadways.
- **Enhanced food security.** The FAO estimates that if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20-30 percent. That would be enough to feed an additional 150 million people.
- **More lasting peace.** When women play a role in conflict situations, they become drivers of reconciliation and reconstruction. Evidence shows that including women in conflict-related decision-making and peace-building efforts can lead to more durable, comprehensive and widely accepted peace agreements.
- **Greater economic growth.** According to USAID, when 10 percent more girls go to school, a country's GDP will grow on average by 3 percent. And a girl's individual earning power increases by 15-25 percent for every year of secondary schooling she receives.

These are just a few ways investing in women and girls enables a community, a country and a continent to flourish.

## What's Next?

By including women in the   
peacekeeping process,  
countries ensure more lasting and  
just outcomes following conflict.  
(UN/Christopher Herwig)

As Secretary Kerry said, “No country can succeed unless every citizen is empowered to contribute to its future. And no peace can endure if women are not afforded a central role.”

We hope that you commit to investing in women and girls. It can be something as simple as reading a book to your younger sister or as elaborate as hosting a series of financial literacy workshops for women in your community. The goal is to act and, through your actions, bring about a more equal, prosperous and secure world for everyone.

Think of the impact the YALI Network could make if all 230,000 of you act.

---

## [Tapping the Entrepreneurial Potential of Africa's Women](#)

Amini Kajunju (Courtesy photo)



“I feel like African women are some of the most entrepreneurial women in the world,” said Amini Kajunju. “Many African women become entrepreneurs because that’s where the opportunities are.”

Kajunju has been studying entrepreneurship and advising entrepreneurs for her entire career. A native of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, she was a program manager at the International Executive Service Corps, which provides free consulting services to businesses in developing countries. She also spent 10 years advising under-resourced entrepreneurs in the New York City area as executive director of the Workshop in Business Opportunities.

Now Kajunju is president and CEO of the Africa-America Institute, a U.S.-based organization working to promote development in Africa. In 2013, she was named among Forbes’ 20 Young Power Women in Africa.

In spite of their entrepreneurial potential, women in the workplace still face significant challenges in Africa and most other countries in the world, Kajunju says. When shown a selection of comments from YALI Network’s [#Africa4Her Virtual Town Hall](#) in which men expressed the belief that women made difficult bosses, she said, “I think views like that are common everywhere.” She thinks they will be less common when more women are in leadership positions and are building businesses. “Entrepreneurship can hopefully create a meritocracy that can break down some of these barriers,” she said. “Because you’re not going to sell your products if you’re just hiring friends of friends,

whether they have skills or not.”


When it comes to advice for entrepreneurs both male and female, Kajunju keeps it simple:

- 1) Know your target market and what your product or service can do for them.
- 2) Hire or work with people who are smarter than you and help them be as productive as possible by being kind and fair.
- 3) Develop thought-leadership within your industry. Share information within your marketplace.

“That’s why entrepreneurship is so amazing to me,” she said, “because it’s the opportunity to set your own rules. Those who join your team get to abide by those rules. And if those rules are about inclusion, gender parity, respect, hard work, productivity, then it doesn’t matter if you’re a man or a woman. We can all rally around those ideas.”

---

## Albinism rights defender: “Don’t be afraid to do what’s right.”

Tanzania’s Vicky Ntetema receives an award from U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry at  the International Women of Courage Awards Ceremony

As a reporter for the BBC World Service, Tanzania’s Vicky Ntetema had a passion for the truth and a willingness to discern fact from fiction, even if it meant going undercover and risking her life to expose falsehoods that jeopardized the lives of her neighbors simply because they looked different.

Thanks to her dedication, the world learned that being born albino in Tanzania can mean anything from social shunning to a severed limb or even being murdered because of myths spread by local witchdoctors.

Do you have what it takes to be a good journalist? Are you willing to uncover the truth and share it, even if the truth is unpopular?

“With journalism, one cannot go wrong, because if you have the facts, if you do your research and you know that what you’re doing is right, nothing can stop you,” Ntetema said. “No threat can frighten you in this world because you have the facts, you have done your research, and you know that what you are saying is the truth.”

[On March 29](#), Secretary of State John Kerry recognized Ntetema for taking risks to expose the murders of people with albinism by giving her the International Women of Courage Award. Her reporting “saved lives and it sparked strong statements of condemnation by Tanzanian officials,” he said. Now as a leader of the nongovernmental organization [Under the Same Sun](#), Ntetema is



“bringing people with albinism out of the shadows and advocating for their fundamental rights.”

Ntetema wants young Africans to understand that “when it comes to human rights, there is no compromise.” Despite the falsehoods being spread by witchdoctors, “people with albinism are human beings and we need to treat them and regard them as human beings first and foremost.”

Tanzania has a high rate of albinism, with one study showing as many as 1 in 1,400 people suffer from the disability, which can cause nearsightedness and cancer from sun exposure, along with social stigmas.

“You may not have a relative or a friend or a neighbor who has albinism but you don’t know if you are carrying the gene,” Ntetema said. In Tanzania, she said 1 in 19 run the risk of having a child with albinism.

If a classmate, relative or neighbor has albinism, don’t rely on witchdoctors for the facts. They profit handsomely from their grisly trade. Instead, learn from persons with albinism themselves who are keenly aware of their needs and challenges.

Once young Africans “understand what albinism is, they will never ever discriminate against people with albinism” and they will be the first people to fight for their rights and wellbeing, Ntetema said.


“If they can go and educate other students, peers and even younger generations about albinism, that would be the best thing that they can do,” she said.

By acting like a good journalist and exposing the myths behind discrimination, young Africans can create a brighter future where everyone is treated the same. “If you know what you’re doing is right, don’t be afraid,” Ntetema said.

---

## **Election Time: Want More Young People to Vote? Go Online**

*This is the third article in a series titled, “Election Time: Lessons from Young Leaders”*

A young voter in Germany compares candidates’ views using the “Wahl-O-Mat.” (© AP ) Images)

*Mariana de Castro Abreu, originally from Brazil, is a lawyer pursuing a master’s degree in human rights and humanitarian action at the Paris Institute of Political Studies. Passionate about different cultures, social justice and human rights, she has lived in North America, South America, Europe and Oceania. She is moving to Africa next semester*

*The views and opinions expressed here belong to the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the YALI Network or the U.S. government.*

Studies from all over the world have shown that when it comes to formal political processes like elections or referendums, younger people are much less likely to participate. Nevertheless, when it comes to the use of technology and social media, the reverse is true: Young people are much more likely to get information this way.

Putting these two observations together, an idea that has shown potential for increasing turnout among young voters is the online advice application. In Brazil, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary and many other countries, online advice applications inform citizens, via any Web-enabled device, about the values and programs of different candidates and political parties.

Here's how it works: The app developers send a standardized questionnaire to each candidate and political party running for a certain office. After receiving answers from the parties, the app gives voters the opportunity to answer the same questions. Finally, the app calculates which political party is closest to the voter's preferences and provides additional information about the party, the politician and its policies.

In the 2013 German federal elections, the voting advice application "[Wahl-O-Mat](#)" was used 13.3 million times. In total, 28 German parties participated by answering 38 different questions on hot-button issues raised during the campaign. Parties had to answer yes or no to a wide range of public-interest topics, such as: "Should we introduce a minimum wage?"; "Should homosexual couples be allowed to adopt?"; "Should the top income tax rate be increased?"; and others. More than one-third of Wahl-O-Mat users were young people, below the age of 30.

In order to have credibility and legitimacy, it is essential that the organization providing this information be independent and neutral — not connected to any political party. It is also a best practice for the developers to confirm in person that a certain number of serious candidates or parties will participate. As a general rule, most parties will take time to participate if they think their rivals are doing the same.

Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that this kind of online tool will not reach everyone. Activists in countries with uneven access to technology should find creative ways of sharing this information with people in their communities who are not yet online. For example, you could have a "voter education day" with a small number of smartphones, where trainers help people in the community use the app and discuss the results as a group.

When using a new digital tool, the political, social, economic and cultural context matters a lot. Institutions and processes working well in one place might fail to take root or produce unintended or even negative results in another. But this is a successful example which can contribute to the spark of ideas and inspiration for raising youth voter turnout, wherever you live.


*Want to read more articles from the, "Election Time: Lessons from Young Leaders" series? Please find them here:*

[When Enough Is Enough: Urban Guerilla Poetry](#)

[Election Time: Lessons from Young Leaders](#)

---

## #IPledgePeaceUg Takes a Stand Against Election Violence

The resident district commissioner of the town of Mbale in the eastern region of Uganda  holds a sign supporting #IPledgePeaceUG. (Courtesy photo)


The October 2015 primaries made many Ugandans uneasy. Observers reported ballots going missing, voting materials being delivered late to polling places, and other election irregularities. More troubling still were outbreaks of violence in a number of locations and the alleged formation of citizen militias.

Like many others, Cyrus Kawalya feared what this meant for the general election in February. “If we didn’t do something, we expected [the violence] to escalate after the general election,” he said. Kawalya undertook a campaign to convince Ugandans that even if they disagreed on which candidates should win and how the election was administered, they should commit to avoiding violence.

With financial assistance from the U.S. Embassy in Kampala, Kawalya launched a six-week civic education and awareness campaign with the hashtag #IPledgePeaceUg. Kawalya, a 2014 Mandela Washington Fellow, enlisted the help of other fellows in Uganda and established a social media presence for the campaign before taking to the road. The team prepared for their roadshow visits with community leaders at their destinations who arranged for local publicity in advance.

“We had been watching different parts of the country,” said Kawalya, “and we decided to go to specific regions that had had violence before.”

Kawalya and his colleagues arrived in towns in the central, eastern and western regions of Uganda in an enormous two-story bus, driving around town and drumming up interest. Their presentation included singers and comedians in local language on the bus’s pop-out stage, blending entertainment with messages of nonviolence. Along with giveaways of T-shirts and wristbands, local police officers and other officials spoke, encouraging peaceful voting. Comic skits with serious underpinnings illustrated how to peacefully resolve political conflict, what to do when people in the same family supported different parties, and how to encourage voter participation.

The #IPledgePeaceUG events included musicians, comedians and local officials  promoting peaceful elections. (Courtesy photo)

Kawalya summarized the #IPledgePeace message this way: “Look, we can’t all belong to the same party, okay? We don’t have to try to kill each other, we don’t have to attack each other. It’s okay to be in the same family and affiliated with different political parties.”

Following each roadshow presentation, Kawalya collected email addresses, and his team picked 20

people to act as ambassadors. The #IPledgePeaceUg team followed up with these ambassadors by phone before and after the election to evaluate the effectiveness of their outreach and to monitor election procedures.

The social-media campaign of #IPledgePeaceUg grew to 1 million Facebook followers, and the hashtag prompted a national dialogue about election violence on Twitter. Kawalya, who owns a video-production company, produced a promotional video with a dozen Ugandan celebrities delivering the #IPledgePeaceUg message. The video ran almost hourly on NBS, a Ugandan TV network, in the weeks leading up to and just after the election.

Although there were a number of irregularities during the election and a high level of dissatisfaction among voters, incidents of violence were relatively few. Kawalya believes the national dialogue about election violence spurred by #IPledgePeaceUg played an important role. He said he has been contacted by young people in a number of other countries seeking to replicate #IPledgePeaceUg for their own elections.

“It made us realize one thing,” said Kawalya. “Most people in Uganda are not interested in violence.”

Learn more about grass-roots organizing in the YALI Network Online Course [Understanding Elections and Civic Responsibility](#).

---

## **Straight talk with Jimmie Briggs about violence against women**

(State Dept.)



If you’ve completed the YALI Network Online Course “[Understanding the Rights of Women and Girls](#),” you’ve learned about the importance of stopping violence against women and girls and you already know Jimmie Briggs, the instructor of the lesson on “Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.”

Briggs is an award-winning journalist and author. His [Man Up Campaign](#) is a global effort to end gender-based violence by providing training, resources and support to anti-violence initiatives. The youth-led organization has delegates in 24 countries working on projects in their communities to raise awareness of gender-based violence with village-based, person-to-person education.

Something one of the delegates said at Man Up’s 2010 launch at the FIFA World Cup in South Africa has stuck with Briggs. “One of our delegates from Liberia said, ‘When you rape a woman, you rape a village,’” Briggs said. “I think about that often when I speak about this issue, because I think that analogy applies to so many transgressions. What happens to women has a ripple effect on all of us.”

Briggs says much of the violence against women stems from the way many cultures define men. “Whether you’re in New York, Afghanistan, Burkina Faso or Ghana, there’s the broad common definition of what being a man is,” he said. “And I think that broad definition tends to be harmful to not only women and girls but to men amongst each other.”

Apart from the perpetrators of gender-based violence, Briggs sees those who will not hold perpetrators accountable as the biggest part of the problem. “We tend to shy away from confrontation when it comes to saying, ‘You shouldn’t say that,’ or ‘Why did you treat her that way?’ or ‘I’m not comfortable with that language.’ Those of us who are not perpetrators have an extra responsibility to be role models 24/7.”

Briggs offered the following advice as to what YALI Network members can do in their own communities to help end gender-based violence:

1. Educate themselves and then their peers, families and colleagues about the impact of gender-based violence (GBV) and what it is.
2. Create safe spaces, or go to existing ones, to have facilitated dialogue on issues of GBV, and inequity.
3. Surface and affirm survivors’ stories and truths in experiencing GBV as a way of destigmatizing the phenomenon. Many people don’t realize how severe it is or widespread because women and girls aren’t encouraged to talk or made to feel safe talking about gender-based violence.
4. Promote accountability. Men and boys must hold each other accountable for behavior or expressed attitudes that reinforce cultures where women and girls are made to believe they’re second-class citizens. Also, society must hold perpetrators accountable for their actions against women and girls.
5. Have inclusive and rigorous curricular models for gender, sexuality, identity and violence implemented in educational settings from childhood through adolescence. It’s critical that candid but serious education of children from the youngest possible ages occur so as to avoid harmful behaviors, but also engender responsibility and identification with gender-related issues as soon as possible.

Have you joined #16days yet? Learn more at [yali.state.gov/16days](http://yali.state.gov/16days) and [pledge](#) today to help end Gender-Based Violence.

---

## **[A Step By Step Planning Guide On Hosting a #YALILearns Event](#)**



By Chukwuma Ephraim Okenwa

As a YALI Network member you have probably taken at least one YALI Network Online Course and earned a certificate and are perhaps contemplating organizing a #YALILearns event to share what you learned with your sphere of contact. However, the challenge might be on how to go about it.

Organizing a [#YALILearns](#) event is not just the right thing to do, it is the smart step to take after you have gone through a YALI Network Online Course. It offers you an opportunity to consolidate what you learned and to give back to your community and to help mentor other young Africans.

#YALILearns events involve educating your community with shared YALI Network resources, hence you should never charge a fee to participants.

You will find the steps outlined here a useful guide for hosting a successful #YALILearns event.

### **Stick to the Basics**

Which YALI Network online course do you wish to facilitate? That should help to give a clue what kind of audience you will have to engage. Choose an audience whose individuals are directly or indirectly concerned with the proposed topic. Someone organizing a #YALILearns event on climate change, may consider inviting farmers, government agencies or individuals.

Farmers could be encouraged by such event to do more for afforestation. Individuals will learn how their small actions can negatively impact our climate and how slight adjustments on their part will help greatly in reversing the trend. The government agencies in turn will be motivated to sponsor bills that will favor the climate.

A topic such as *Ending Violence Against Women and Girls* sounds appropriate for a feminine audience but in the real sense is good for the male folks, who in most cases are the culprits when it comes to gender-based violence.

A civic leadership course would make much sense to leaders of NGOs and leaders of civil society groups.

The course objectives can serve as a guide in deciding what kind of persons will benefit the most from your #YALILearns event. Each lesson includes a discussion guide with objectives and important points for your audience.

### **Choice of Venue**

Choosing a venue will have great impact on your event. The venue for the event sets the mood and tone before your audience arrives.

Consider using a natural environment with green areas or trees for your event on climate change; a Women Development Centre for the topic Paving Way for the Women Entrepreneurs, etc.

Where such relative venues are not readily accessible, the available one can be modified to reflect the theme of your event.

A #YALILearns event can actually be held in any venue that you consider conducive to your



audience; the environment automatically becomes a #YALILearns “classroom” once the online course is streamed, or when the transcripts are distributed and discussed among participants.

Aesthetics such as roll-up banners, relevant charts/pictures can also help to reflect the theme, but are not at all obligatory. A small group could discuss these important issues and review materials in any venue at all.

As the administrator at a school, I have access to a site that is optimal for learning. It is equipped with computers and printers. If there are similar venues near you, I would recommend that you contact them to see if they would let you use their space. When I make use of the school premises where I work, I do so at no cost. However on two occasions when I hosted the #YALILearns events at some other venues, I took time to share the vision of YALI and the purpose of the #YALILearns events with the owners of such place; the goodwill was awesome. I got discounts of 90% and 50% respectively. In those cases, I fund the event myself and I take delight in doing so. YALI educates me for free and that’s my own little way of extending the same opportunities to my own sphere of contacts. When you find a venue that is willing to support #YALILearns, share it with others. I have told the YALI Network members within Enugu, Nigeria to feel free to apply to use my school for their #YALILearns Event – at no cost!

### **Promote Your Event**



Create your event in the YALI Network Face2Face group at [www.facebook.com/groups/YALInetwork](https://www.facebook.com/groups/YALInetwork) to invite YALI Network members in the areas near you.

You can invite friends, family and others via SMS, Whatsapp or email. I have found bulk SMS quite effective. Speaking to individuals on one-on-one basis has also yielded good results. I also make sure to create an event at the YALI Network Face2Face group by visiting <https://www.facebook.com/groups/yalinetwork/events/>, then finding the button for “Create Event.” Make sure to provide city, country and event details – then share the event with the group to invite other YALI Network members.

A letter of invitation is also recommended, if you wish to invite high profile individuals in your community, but again, this is not required. You can facilitate many of these courses without inviting high profile individuals. You are probably more of an expert on many of these topics than you give yourself credit for – and starting a conversation with the discussion guides makes the event inclusive and participatory. In addition, there will be audience members who will be able to contribute their knowledge to the conversation.

### **Be Consistent with #YALILearns Ideals**

You can present the YALI Network Online Course either by streaming the video or audio, downloading the video or audio, or you can print and distribute the written transcripts to participants.

Be sure to review the lesson discussion guides for the course you wish to facilitate. Find time to watch the lesson, [Designing and Delivering Training](#). In all, let the learning objectives serve as a sure guide to evaluating how successful your event was.



Be sure to keep records of your events: highlights, pictures or video and sometimes a communiqué are reasonably expected.

### **Make it Very Interactive**



Have participants choose a partner and have each person introduce themselves briefly. This should include name, occupation and personal interests/motivation and way(s) the individual serves to improve his community.

Initiate brief discussions after watching each segment of the video. Give room for group activity by splitting the participants into small groups to brainstorm on relevant issues connected with the course and having a selected person by the group to present to the whole audience what they discussed in their unit groups.

Awareness skits are another great way to engage the participants. For instance if you are facilitating a session on the topic *Supporting a Girl's Right to Learn*, you can have a participant play the role of an out-of-school girl and have another person try to convince her to go back to school. At the end of the skit, ask the out-of-school girl, if she was indeed convinced.

Encourage participants to share their experiences where applicable. A #YALILearns event on *Ending Violence Against Women and Girls*, will not be complete without having a few persons who have experienced gender- based violence share their experiences.

After the event, I make room for the participants to respond to the lectures, sharing with us things they were able to LEARN, UNLEARN AND RELEARN and how they intend to take advantage of their new experience to do things differently. Thereafter I advocate strongly for participants to visit [yali.state.gov](http://yali.state.gov), review the course once more and take the online quiz to earn their YALI Network Online Course certificate.

### **Keep the flow**

Encourage participants to join the network by filling in their details at [yali.state.gov](http://yali.state.gov). Collect the email addresses of participants and submit them alongside your report on the [#YALILearns feedback page](#).

The email address that you submitted could assist in inviting them to join the biggest network of young African Leaders.

Most importantly remember to share the highlights of your events with other YALI Network members on the [YALI Network Face2Face](#) group.

This will inspire other Network members to do likewise, thus resulting in an ever increasing impact.

You can start now!





---